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Oakland Residents Voice Concern over 'Deferred' Road Projects

(LANSING) – A lack of proper state infrastructure, loss of development and waste of taxpayers dollars are the direct result of the Administration's decision to cancel 34 statewide road projects, Oakland County residents testified to a Senate Committee at the Oakland County Commissioner's Auditorium last night.

"I am grateful for the overwhelming number of citizens who came forth last night to voice their concerns over the suspended road projects," Senator Jud Gilbert, R-Algonac, said. "Obviously local folks have been expecting these scheduled projects to be completed in a timely fashion. For the Department of Transportation to pull the rug out from under them is completely unacceptable."

Approximately 65 Oakland County residents attended the meeting conducted by Gilbert, chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, Senator Nancy Cassis, R-Novi, Senator Mike Bishop, R-Rochester, and Senator Gilda Jacobs, D-Huntington Woods.

Business leaders and residents testified to the committee regarding their concerns over the interchanges on Interstate 96 at Beck and Wixom roads. Those interchanges have been outdated and in immediate need of repair due to local growth and expansion. An eye-opening number of accidents and fatalities have also resulted from the antiquated interchanges.

In November 2002 Novi and Wixom residents passed a \$6 million bond to fund a

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local match to update the interchanges. As Novi City Manager Richard Helwick testified at the meeting, those residents have paid taxes on a project that was suspended by the Department of Transportation (MDOT). “This is a fix-it-first project,” Helwick said.

Echoing those sentiments was Ed Anzig, director of planning for Rochester Hills. Anzig noted the city had completed engineering designs and environmental studies for the Adams Road project, and received the majority of right of way property. Anzig told the committee MDOT gave no indication the project would be pulled.

“I hope the Administration understands what MDOT has done to these communities,” Gilbert said. “There are plenty of angry citizens who are tired of dilapidated, out-dated roads that not only are hampering local development, but also pose a serious safety concern for motorists.”

To counter the Administration’s “Preserve First” program, Republicans have reaffirmed existing dollars in the Department of Transportation budget. Those funds are derived from federal sources and gas tax revenues earmarked specifically for such programs. The budget is expected to pass out of the Senate this week, effectively restoring the 34 critical statewide road projects.